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INFO RUEHBU/AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES IMMEDIATE 1741
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS IMMEDIATE 7116
RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ JAN 7641
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA IMMEDIATE 3188
RUEHZP/AMEMBASSY PANAMA IMMEDIATE 8723
RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO IMMEDIATE 3797
RUEHSG/AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO IMMEDIATE 1931

C O N F I D E N T I A L BOGOTA 000832

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/26/2016
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PREL](#) [CO](#)
SUBJECT: LEFT IN COLOMBIA MAY MOVE FARTHER LEFT

Classified By: Ambassador William B. Wood
Reason: 1.4 (b,d)

¶1. (C) Former Foreign Minister Maria Emma Mejia told Ambassador Wood on January 24 that the leadership of the Polo Democratico Alternativo (specifically Representative Gustavo Petro) is attempting to move the party farther to the populist left, alienating Mejia and other moderate members of the party. According to Mejia, Gustavo Petro is winning internal party debates against moderates such as Bogota Mayor "Lucho" Garzon. Mejia said she was unwilling to accept the party's leftist drift and therefore withdrew her name from consideration as the Polo's lead Senate candidate in the March 12 Congressional elections. Mejia said Petro's growing influence presages closer Polo identification with Hugo Chavez and Evo Morales. Prominent Polo candidate for the House of Representatives Daniel Garcia-Pena (and one of the five civil society guarantors for the GOC-ELN exploratory talks) told poloffs January 26 that Mejia's decision was a loss to the party, but he claimed Mejia only withdrew her name after learning that Polo leaders had voted for Petro to head the party's Senate list.

PDA Infighting

¶2. (C) Mejia explained clearly that, without her and other moderates on the candidate list, PDA would not get its target 15 Senate seats. She confirmed press reports of infighting between moderate leftists such as Bogota Mayor Lucho Garzon, Medellin Mayor Sergio Fajardo, and Valle del Cauca Governor Angelina Garzon with Petro and others over the party's ideological direction. The moderates represent a pragmatic, Lula-like perspective, whereas the Petro faction leans towards a Chavez/Morales-style populism. Bogota Mayor "Lucho" Garzon was one of Mejia's strongest supporters in the debate over who should head the party's Senate campaign. Garzon regarded the moderate, popular, and well-known Mejia as a candidate who could expand the party's influence by attracting new voters.

Comment

¶3. (C) As this cable is being sent, prominent Liberal Party Senatorial candidate and former party chief Piedad Cordoba is opening her campaign in Caracas, ostensibly to get the votes of Colombians living there, but also to associate herself with the Chavez phenomenon. We will track pro-Venezuelan

movements among the PDA and the Liberal Party closely.
WOOD